



***Mindframe* advice for media re use of dangerous images during Fashion Week 6-10 April, 2014**

Media alert – 8 April 2014

Newsrooms: Please cascade to all staff, in particular features writers and those covering Fashion Week

Mindframe, in conjunction with The Butterfly Foundation, would like to remind Australian media covering this year's Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week to be cautious when reporting and using imagery in stories related to body image and eating disorders.

To support journalists, there are specific media resources for reporting eating disorders [here](#)

QUICK TIPS

Eating disorders are serious and complex mental illnesses with severe physical consequences. Approximately 9% of Australians will experience an eating disorder at some point in their lifetime. At risk people, who are ill with an eating disorder or an illness related to body idolisation, are attracted to media coverage that includes imagery of extreme body weight and shape. With this in mind, *Mindframe* encourages the Australian media to:







- Avoid use of images of people with extreme body weights or shapes, as this may motivate some people at risk to strive to achieve an unrealistic shape or size;
- Always present eating disorders as serious mental illnesses;
- When interviewing a person with an eating disorder, apply sensitivity and discretion. Where possible source someone who has recovered and is trained to speak to the media;
- Check whether the person understands that their name and/or other identifying information may be used in the story and the impact of it being disclosed publicly;
- Remember that it is safest when details about behaviours or measurements as well as 'before' and 'after' images are not used;
- Ensure the use of photographs, images or footage of the person are only used with the person's consent and understanding of the impact this may have;
- Be cautious about engaging with potential sources through social media. It is difficult to tell a person's age or whether someone is currently well or at risk without personal contact.

TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS WHEN REPORTING EATING DISORDERS:

Certain language can alienate members of the community, sensationalise the issue or inadvertently contribute to disordered eating being presented as glamorous or an option for dealing with problems. The context in which language is used is important. Some general issues, and suggestions of how these may be addressed, are presented below.

Can certain information or images be problematic?

Certain information and images can be associated with greater body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviour in people who may be at risk. Some common issues faced, and possible recommendations to address these, are presented below.

 Issue	 Options
Detailed and specific information of how a person engaged in behaviours associated with an eating disorder may prompt others at risk to engage in harmful 'copycat' behaviours.	 Discuss behaviours in general terms (e.g. purging) without reference to the steps taken, frequency of the behaviour or any implements used.
The inclusion of measurements or other quantifiable details in text or visual captions (e.g. weight, BMI, number of hours of exercise, kilojoule intake) could promote harmful competition or comparison (e.g. <i>"I only lost 43kg not 50, I only did 3 hours of exercise, not 5"</i>).	 Try to present images, information and captions which relate to health and wellbeing.
Images of people with extreme body weights or shapes can have adverse effects by motivating some people to try to achieve an unrealistic body shape or size.	 Include a diversity of images, including people who have a variety of sizes and shapes.
Specific references to or visuals of pro-eating disorder websites can promote places where people at risk can be introduced or exposed to unhelpful tricks and tips.	 Discuss sites in general terms only or where possible refrain from any reference to them.

QUICK TIPS FOR REPORTING

- ▶ Present eating disorders as serious mental illnesses accompanied by physical consequences rather than as a lifestyle choice or part of an entertainment story;
- ▶ It is useful to focus on how the eating disorder impacts on the person and on their family;
- ▶ Detailing specific behaviours, measurements or quantities can be problematic as these may prompt others at risk to engage in these harmful behaviours;
- ▶ Avoid use of images of people with extreme body weights or shapes, as this may motivate some people at risk to strive to achieve an unrealistic shape or size;
- ▶ Language is best if it does not label the person by their illness or present eating disorders as glamorous or an option for dealing with problems (refer to media guide on use of language);
- ▶ If someone is telling their personal story it is best if they are supported by an appropriate organisation;
- ▶ Consider how celebrity stories are handled and try to avoid glamorising the illness or presenting it as entertainment;
- ▶ Eating disorders are a specialised field, so consult with recognised experts for accuracy and clarity;
- ▶ Promote help-seeking by adding information about support services.

HELP-SEEKING INFORMATION

Media are encouraged to promote help-seeking information as evidence shows that when treated early, people can have very good outcomes. A list of contacts targeted at eating disorders is provided below:

**Help Seeking**

Specific eating disorder helplines

- **National**
The Butterfly Foundation support line
1800 33 4673 (1800 ED HOPE);
support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au
- **Victoria**
Eating Disorders Foundation Victoria
(03) 9885 0318 (metro); 1300 550 236 (non-metro);
edfv@eatingdisorders.org.au

Other crisis, counselling and online services

- Lifeline - 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
- Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelp.com.au
- SANE Australia Helpline 1800 18 SANE (7263)
www.sane.org
- headspace – www.headspace.org.au
- ReachOut – www.reachout.com

Further advice can be found by visiting the [Mindframe website](http://www.mindframe-media.info) or contacting:

- The *Mindframe* project team Tel: 02 4924 6904 (0427 227 503); Email: mindframe@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au; Twitter: [@MindframeMedia](https://twitter.com/MindframeMedia).
- The Butterfly Foundation – Jenny Muir Mob: 0415 401 200; Elaine Banoub Mob: 0412 237 673
- The SANE Media Centre Tel: 03 9682 5933 Mob: 0414 427 291; Email: media@sane.org

Kind regards,

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Hunter Institute of Mental Health

PO Box 833 Newcastle NSW 2300; T 02 4924 6719 [|kristy.platt@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kristy.platt@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au); www.himh.org.au

Need to know more about reporting suicide and mental illness? Visit: www.mindframe-media.info

You can now follow the [Hunter Institute of Mental Health](http://www.himh.org.au) on  and 